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# Navy Expeditionary Team Assist Mexican Navy with Undersea Medicine

Filed under FLEET AND THE FLEET MARINE FORCE, U.S. MARINE CORPS, U.S. NAVY (NO COMMENTS)

By Capt. Bruce A. Cohen, force surgeon, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command



ACAPULCO, Mexico – (Feb. 22, 2013) Capt. Bruce A. Cohen, force surgeon at Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC), congratulates Mexican navy sailors upon completion of the clinical hyperbaric training at the Search, Rescue and Diving School in Acapulco, Mexico. U.S. Navy medical specialists instructed 30 Mexican navy physicians, nurses and divers. (U.S. Navy photo/Released)

Recently I had the great experience of working with a team of U.S. Navy medical specialists deployed to Acapulco, Mexico, Search, Rescue and Diving School to teach a training course focusing on hyperbaric oxygen therapy and diving medicine in response to a request from the Mexican Navy.

This type of training opportunity marks the second time in U.S. Navy history, where U.S.

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forces put together a clinical medical course, as well as instructed the course on behalf of a foreign Navy. Last year marked the first time. It was an honor to be a part of this experience.

The Mexican Navy has 17 hyperbaric chambers, but their program to develop the expertise to utilize the equipment to its fullest potential is still in its infancy. We've been doing this a long time, so they turned to us for assistance. A hyperbaric chamber is a cylindrical compartment that artificially reproduces pressure conditions found under the sea, allowing for an isolated form of oxygen therapy to be used in both diving-related and non-diving medical applications. These chambers are essential in preventing and treating decompression sickness in divers.

The intent during the event was to provide a series of courses training Mexican Navy personnel in the operations and training procedures for hyperbaric chambers, and assist them in establishing a military certification process for trained personnel. [NECC](#) places high focus on assisting our counterparts with this training as it better supports the interoperability of shared and joint missions.



ACAPULCO, Mexico (Feb. 20, 2013) Capt. Bruce A. Cohen, force surgeon at Navy Expeditionary Command (NECC), speaks to Mexican navy students at the Search, Rescue and Diving School in Acapulco, Mexico. A group of U.S. Navy medical specialists instructed a clinical hyperbaric oxygen therapy course for Mexican navy physicians, nurses and divers. (U.S. Navy photo/Released)

In September of 2011, I met with Mexican officials to discuss the goals of the fellowship between the two nations. I then assembled a team of colleagues; Capt. Brett B. Hart, head of the Hyperbaric Training Department at the [Naval Aerospace Medicine Institute](#), and Master Chief Mitchell T. Pearce, the force medical master chief at NECC, and gathered current materials to prepare a 40-hour training course for the Mexican Navy.

The primary focus was on chamber operations, wound care, and basic medicine for treatment of patients in a hyperbaric environment. During the five-day course, the two Navies worked together sharing knowledge, discussing case studies, and participating in lectures and group interactions.

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A group of 30 Mexican Navy physicians, nurses and divers from all over the country attended the course in the newly renovated Search, Rescue and Diving School in Acapulco. The school provides students with a state of the art facility and the latest technology including a hyperbaric chamber, real-time instant translators, and electronic whiteboards.

The initial training was the first of several proposed courses. The follow-on courses will allow the students from the first course to transition into a training role by the final course. Upon completion of the series, the Mexican sailors will be instructing the course and have established a certification process.

This series of training courses will assist in educating trainers and skilled operators for these medical devices.

As an educator, I am very pleased with the outcome. I think this program has a good future and the students will certainly be able to take it over by the fourth course. I look forward to going back and watching the program grow.

*\*Editor's note: Cohen holds a Fellowship in Hyperbaric/Hypobaric Medicine from Duke University Medical Center.*



Navy Medicine personnel and members of the Mexican Navy who completed the hyperbaric medicine training course.

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